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Repast

Quarterly Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

TURKISH *YUFKA* AND ITS OFFSPRING

text and photos by Bruce Kraig

Bruce Z. Kraig is President of the Culinary Historians of Chicago and Professor Emeritus of History and Humanities at Roosevelt University. A nationally- and internationally-known culinary historian, he is the author of hundreds of articles on food and food history and several cookbooks, most recently The Cuisines of Hidden Mexico *(John Wiley, 1996). Food for Thought Productions, Inc., a project of Dr. Kraig and his wife, Janice I. Thompson, has created Hidden-Journeys™, an award-wining series of documentaries about the foods and cultures of foreign lands, shot on-location for PBS-TV. Their latest program, "Hidden Turkey", is scheduled for broadcast on PBS this autumn.*

In the course of shooting a documentary on Turkish foodways and history, our production crew was traveling through the central province called Anatolia, in the region of Yozgat. In a country with such varied landscapes and traditions, we focused on two regions: the center, or Anatolia including Cappadocia; and the eastern Black Sea region. Shooting in the field is a grueling task because it means traveling long hours, unloading, setting up equipment and shooting for even longer hours. The process may be more tedious than glamorous, but the pleasures are great for mind and palate.

For the historian, the name Anatolia ("the East" to ancient Greeks, and meaning all of Asia Minor) is magical because this part of the world has been a stage upon which every ancient civilization of the western world, from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods on, has appeared. The land is littered with monuments, some visible and some not, from that rich past. Foods are critical parts of Turkey's deep history and some of them are deliciously visible to visitors.

Grain has stood at the base of most cultures since at least the 8th Millennium BCE, and to some extent long before, as recent archeological evidence implies.[1]

Although we were not in the Karaçadag Mountains of southeastern Turkey, one of the presumed heartlands of primary wheat and barley domestication, we were not far from Çatal Hüyük, one of the most famous early-Neolithic villages.[2] We were also near the kind of early civilization that was based on large-scale production of grains, the site of the ancient Hittite capital Hattusas (modern Bogazköy). Grain grinding must mean that people ate gruels and also flatbreads baked on flat stones heated on open hearths. These and other bread-making traditions remain embedded in Turkish cuisine, and there is no type more representative of the Turkish peoples' history than the thin flatbread called *yufka*. Nor is there any other bread more important in world food history.

The autumn is dry and warm in Anatolia, and so we stopped at a modern roadside filling station/café for lunch. Chatting with the proprietor over small cups of tea (Turks have the world's highest per-capita consumption of tea), we asked if perhaps there might be a more traditional village in the neighborhood, some place where people made old-fashioned dishes. Yes indeed, he said, my friend here comes from Bopazliyay, and if you give him a ride, he'll take you there. We did and he did.

Driving down a dusty lane, we came to a village centered on a small mosque. The houses were made of cinder block and bricks, but the way of life was a mixture of new and old. A group of older men sat on a tree-shaded bench in front of the mosque, the women nowhere to be seen. "Oh", we were told, "they're out working, have some tea." Eventually, after a surfeit of

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Silk Road Adventures

Part One

TOO COOL! HOW THE CHAA CHILLED OUT LAST FALL

Everyone knows that advances in cooking and heating technologies, from wood fires to microwaves, have reshaped the culinary arts over and over again. But how often do we consider the same for *cooling* technologies? CHAA founder Janice Longone, in her talk on Sept. 19 at the Clements Library (University of Michigan), described the "democratization of ice", a process in which this commodity was turned from a luxury into a necessity. A crowd of about 200 people attended the illustrated lecture, scheduled in conjunction with the exhibit Jan had curated, "The Iceman Cometh… and Goeth!" The talk was jointly sponsored by the Library and held in the same hall as the exhibit itself. In the early 1800s, Jan told us, Massachusetts businessmen Frederick Tudor and Nathaniel Wyeth began large-scale pond-ice harvesting and long-distance ice shipments, even to hot climes such as the Deep South, Brazil, and India. After 1870, natural ice harvesting gave way to artificial ice production in large plants. A reliable ice supply transformed American life: producers could store fruits or other perishable items year-round and ship them over vast distances, German cold-lager beer could be produced on a mass scale, and people could make iced drinks and ice cream in their own homes. Mary Engle Pennington, a Philadelphia food scientist who worked at USDA, designed new ice-refrigerated boxcars, and devised food refrigeration standards that helped lead to enforcement of the 1906 U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act. After 1930, the prevalence of mechanical home refrigerators dealt a blow to the ice industry, but created more new opportunities for consumers. The "fridge" freed women from the daily need to shop, or even— thanks to refrigerated leftovers— to cook.

"Nothing says lovin' like something from the oven", according to the old Pillsbury slogan. And it's true that a warm hearth and a hot, home-baked meal are symbols of nurture and love. Ironically, that was a key motive for people to make their homes frigid in the early days of air-conditioning, explained Marsha Ackermann in her Oct. 17 talk, "Hot Meals in Cool Kitchens: Selling Air-Conditioning in the 1950's". Ad campaigns pitched the idea that by cooling the home, the housewife could prepare hot meals comfortably year-round for her family. While the first home AC unit had been installed by Carrier in Buffalo in 1902, sales remained modest, and the technology was mostly used in factories and movie theaters. People thought that only a small number of households would ever convert to AC. But after WW2, sweltering over a hot kitchen range was portrayed by advertisers as antiquated, a symbol of 19th-Century life. This idea was accepted first by homeowners in the Northeast and Midwest, and eventually in the South and Southwest. Today, 83% of U.S. homes are air-conditioned.

By November, with Michigan weather itself becoming frigid, the CHAA had to retreat from its chilly theme! Instead, we heard a warm presentation by Sandra Sherman on Nov. 21, entitled "Fresh from the Past: Why 18th-Century Food Matters Today". Sherman, an English professor and New Historicist, studies British cookbooks and other culinary literature for what they reveal about the culture of the period. Food was an important expression of British nationalism, she said, which arose after the Isles were united in the early 1700s. Practical cookery books by Hannah Glasse and others, as well as Epicurean food guides and patriotic essays and poems, championed characteristically British food and drink: roast beef, mincemeat pies, puddings, ale, beer, cider, etc. Against this backdrop, there was also a cosmopolitan and experimental spirit. Cookbook writers would sneak in French-style recipes, such as the cullis (*coulis*). The craving for coffee, tea, sugar and spices fed an appetite for colonialism, and a long-term consequence was that British subjects were introduced to foreign foods such as pilaf, couscous, and tofu. Greenhouses were built to allow citrus fruits and other exotic plants to be grown. Inclusion of such new and foreign foods became an important selling-point for cookbooks, the first books to be heavily marketed.

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TURKISH *YUFKA* *continued from page 1*

sweet Black Sea tea, we asked if we could talk with some of the village women about cooking. “Food? Of course”, we were told. We walked through the village, past groups of curious chickens and ducks. Behind a small cluster of houses, we came upon just the perfect scene we had been seeking: a shed in which two women sat making fresh sheets of *yufka*.

Mother and daughter, dressed in full flowing outfits and headscarves, Nezir and Rabia were sitting on short stools, making a key ingredient of the family diet. Rabia, in front, plucked a handful of dough from a pile set before her, quickly spread it out on a floured board, and then, using a long, thin rolling pin, deftly rolled out paper-thin round sheets of unleavened wheat dough. Each one, perfectly formed, was passed to Nezir, who sat before a small stick-fed hearth. Atop it was a flat metal griddle called a *saj*. One by one, Nezir placed each sheet on the *saj* until small bubbles appeared, turned it over, and baked the bread until it was pliable but done. A large stack of *yufkas* was already in a nearby basket, covered with a cloth. When we asked the women how many they were making, they replied: “Enough to keep us for several months.” That meant keeping the pile in a dry place to preclude spoilage, especially since no preservatives were ever used.

Seeing that we looked hungrily at the delicious-smelling breads, the women offered us a little snack: *gözleme.* A *yufka* was cut into quarters, slathered with some fresh butter, and partly covered with slices of locally-made cow’s-milk cheese. The whole was folded over and heated on the *saj*. There in the open, with the smoke of a wood fire in the air, this was the most delicious melted-cheese sandwich any of us had ever eaten. And it was a dish straight from Turkish history.

The Mother of All Pasta

Yufka is often said to be the bread of the Turkish homelands, from the days when Turkish groups moved across the lands of Central Asia with their flocks. Clearly, though, unleavened flatbreads are much older. Domesticated wheat reached the western borders of the Eurasian steppelands probably in the later 6th Millennium BCE, brought by horticulturists/farmers from the East European Neolithic tradition.[3] The breads were mainly flatbreads, although where ovens have been found in the later Neolithic traditions of Eastern Europe, raised breads must have been made. In Turkey, round breads called *pide* are one of the major types.[4] From the edges of Eastern Europe, domesticated grains spread eastward toward China, together with settled agriculture and then pastoralism. Although the name “Turk” may appear in Chinese

Making *gözleme*

sources in the 2nd Millennium BCE, the lifeway was older. Peoples of Central Asia practiced small-scale farming or, if entirely pastoralist, traded with grain-growing peoples. Thus, *yufka* must be a relic of the oldest bread-making traditions of the Eurasian world.

Yufka is the base for varieties of Turkish dishes, and in these forms has played a significant role in Old World food traditions. *Böreg(k)*, in which ingredients are wrapped in, or layered between, thin dough sheets, is one class of such dishes; *manti*, or dumplings, is another; and *baklava*, paper-thin dough sheets, layered with nuts and covered with sugar syrup, is yet another. Charles Perry has given compelling arguments for the Central Asian origins of all such dishes:

> One thing that strikes any student of ancient Turkish grain cookery is that the nomadic Turks were fascinated by the idea of achieving layers in their breads and cakes. Lacking ovens, they were unable to make thick breads of the sort that settled peoples often make. Perhaps for this very reason they felt the necessity of creating variety in the thickness of their breads, and this is why we find them making thick cakes built up by layering, as the Uzbeks make today.[5]
>
> The basic meaning of the ancient Turkish word *yubqa* was a thin, flat bread, and the word still has that meaning in various Turkish languages (Osmanli among them). However, there is evidence that the meaning of a layered bread goes back many centuries. In the 11th-Century dictionary *Kitab Diwan Lughat al-Turk*, Mahmud of Kashgar defined *yuvgha* and *yupqa* as “thin bread”, but he also recorded the expression *qatma yuvgha*, which he translated into Arabic as *khubz mughaddan*, meaning “folded” (or perhaps “wrinkled” or “pleated”) bread. It will be observed that *qatma* contains the same root *qat*, meaning “layer”, found in *Qatlama*, so it is virtually certain that *qatma yuvgha* was layered.[6]

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TURKISH *YUFKA* *continued from page 3*

The same or similar words appear in languages across Central Asia today, ranging from Xinjiang, China to Uzbekistan.

It would seem that dishes based on thinly-rolled doughs spread with migration or cultural contacts from their homeland to the east and west, especially along the Silk Road trade routes. *Manti* is a good example. The word appears in north China (*man t'ou*), Korea (*mandoo*), and Tibet (*momo*). Like the Turkish variety, these are boiled dumplings and might be related to all the dumplings of Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, and maybe Italy.[7] *Manti* can be small, like Asian dumplings, but often are quite large, used as a main dish, and served either with the liquid in which they were cooked or with a garlicky tomato sauce and yogurt. In some places a grated hard cheese/ground nuts/browned butter sauce is used. None of the Asian dumplings are so large, although the Korean *won mandoo* ("big *mandoo*") come closer to the original in size. *Yufka*, after all, is large.

Using information from a 19th-Century glossary that was based on much older sources, Günay Kut shows the relationship of *yufka*-like doughs to boiled dumplings:

> ***Manti***: *Bourek* is prepared like *tutmach yufkasi*. We came across the following information about *tutmach yufkasi* in Ahmet Cavit's glossary [under] "vermicelli". This information means that *manti* dough is the same as vermicelli dough. However it is divided into bigger pieces in preparing *manti*. The meat of the rump of the sheep ground two times, added salt, peeled chickpea, spices and cinnamon are kneaded with vinegar. After putting this preparation on the pieces of wafer, we fold them leaving their endings slightly open. We arrange these *mantis* on an oiled tray. [Then] a bowl full with water is placed in a big saucepan on which the tray is placed covered with another tray so that the steam coming out from the water does not spoil the *mantis*. The *mantis* cooked in this way in four or five hours are served with garlic flavored yogurt.
>
> This dish is liked and preferred by Turkish even today. In almost every cookery book we encounter with a *manti* recipe. In some cases, these recipes show some regional variations.[8]

The earliest documentary evidence for *yufka*-based dishes dates to the 12th Century, as in Song Dynasty China. No doubt they appeared earlier, since Turkic peoples had a powerful influence during the T'ang (618-907), and Turks were in Anatolia by the early 11th Century. But none of these early dates applies to the ultimate refinement of *yufka*, namely *baklava*. Perry thinks that a sweet found in Azerbaijan, called *baki*

Rolling *yufka*

pakhlavasi, is an ancestor. Here, eight layers of noodle-thick dough are layered with nuts. Something similar, although not layered, was found by Kut in Shirwani's 13th-Century cookery manual, and it is tellingly called a *bourek*:

> ***Sheker bourek***: The almond is pounded after peeling, then, it is softened on the wood with a rolling-pin. The sugar is crumbled (sugar loaf: cone-shaped mass of sugar, as formerly made and sold) such as flour but not like powder. The amount of the almond and the sugar are measured equally. However it will be more tasteful if a little more sugar is added. Two measures of *kuyruk yaghi* (fat rendered down from the tail of the fat-tailed sheep) and one measure of clarified butter are added to the before sieved and prepared flour together with one measure of salted and warm water. If you put a little bit of yeast to the dough the result will be more successful. After that, the almond and musk-flavoured rose water are added. The paste is rolled and cut into pieces. Then with a rolling-pin little pieces are made and after putting on the middle of these rounds the before prepared sweetened almond we fold and put them in the oven. After taking it out, rose water and sugar are sprinkled on the rounds.[9]

Sugared sweet pastry surely came after Turkish contact with Arabic and Persian culinary traditions, perhaps as early as the 9th Century but most certainly by the 11th. After 1453, that intermingling of Mediterranean and Central Asian cuisine continued in the imperial kitchens of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Here, as almost everyone agrees, the thinnest *yufka* sheets, 50 or more, were layered with varieties of nuts and cream, covered in sugar syrup or honey and baked into the now-familiar dish. From here *baklava* spread throughout the Turkish empire from the Levant to the Balkans (including Greek *phyllo*, meaning "leaf") and, likely, further into Europe, where it became *millefeuilles* ("thousand leaves" in French).

Cooking *yufka*

Yufka and its derivatives are everyday foods in modern Turkey. Plain *yufka* is served with the soups and stews for which Turkish cooks are famous, but as indicated it is a platform for varieties of other commonly-eaten dishes. *Boregs* cross all dining categories: they appear on dinner tables at home, as homemade snacks, and as street food. *Boregs* are both numerous and regional. Food historian Nevin Halici recorded these from the Bolu region, between Istanbul and Ankara: *Su böregi*, *Kiymali yufka böregi*, *Cevizli yufka böregi*, *Alt üst böregi*, *Etli manti*, *Sade manti*, *Kesli cevizli manti*, and *Çig börek* (*Tatar böregi*).[10] *Su böregi* ("winter *boregs*") are filled with ground meat and parsley, or white cheese with parsley and dill; *Çig börek* has ground meat and is served with yogurt and red pepper flakes; while *Kiymali yufka böregi* are spinach-filled. In season, the Black Sea region produces *Hamsi boregs*, *hamsi* being a kind of anchovy that is highly prized. Many *boregs* are universal, such as *Sigara boregi*, literally "cigarette *boregs*", in which triangular pieces of *yufka* are rolled into tight tubes and filled with white or feta cheese. Although numerous and varied in Turkey, *boregs* have lives outside the Anatolian peninsula. *Boreks* or *bureks* are made in Armenia, the Balkans, and other places where Turks once held political sway. If, then, there is one food that truly means "Turkish", it must be *yufka* and its many children.

One last tale. After weeks of tramping through the countryside, shooting and eating, we ended the trip in Istanbul. We were scheduled to visit a classic Ottoman restaurant not far from the Topkapi Palace complex later that evening. Walking down a busy street that afternoon, past many a food stand, all of us became ravenously hungry. So we stopped at one place and ordered plenty of cheesy, buttery *gözleme* and lamb *boregs*... and quickly gobbled them. Hearty is an understatement for these delectables, and so full were we that by dinner time— after 8:00 p.m., of course— we could hardly eat a bite, causing our Turkish hosts to marvel at our unaccustomed American restraint. On the flight back, we wondered how long it would be before The Hot Boreg fast-food chain would appear. ■

Endnotes

1. Recent evidence for Paleolithic grain processing in the Near East dating to about 23,000 B.P. is discussed in Ehud Weiss, Wilma Wetterstrom, Dani Nadel, and Ofer Bar-Yosef, "The broad spectrum revisited: Evidence from plant remains", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 101: 26 (June 29, 2004), pp. 9551-9555; full text available online at http://www.pnas.org/
2. See note on this by Mark Rose, "Einkorn's Debut", *Archaeology* 51:1 (January/February 1998).
3. See Marek Zvelebil and Malcolm Lillie, "Transition to Agriculture in Eastern Europe", in T. Douglas Price, ed., *Europe's First Farmers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 57-92.
4. The generic name for ordinary white bread is *ekmek*, but breads are usually typed as follows: *yufka*, flat unleavened sheets; *pide*, flatter leavened breads shaped into circles or ovals, with brushed egg coatings and for Ramadan sprinkled with sesame or cumin seed; *somun*, raised round loaves; *simit*, dry ringbreads or flatbreads, sprinkled with sesame seeds, sold by street vendors throughout the Middle East. These general descriptions exclude the many varieties of stuffed savory and sweet pastries served in Turkey. See a number of websites, e.g., http://www.cankan.com/gturkishcuisine/41tc-grains.htm.
5. Charles Perry, "The Central Asian Origins of *Baklava*", in Feyzi Halici, ed., *Second International Food Congress, 1988* (Konya: Konya Kültür ve Turizm Vakfi, 1989), vol. I.
6. Charles Perry, "The Taste for Layered Bread among the Nomadic Turks and the Central Asian Origins of *Baklava*", in Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper, eds., *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994).
7. See Eugene Anderson, *The Food of China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 143-145 for comments on wheat in China, Central Asian origins, and a suggestion that Russian *pelmeni* and Italian *ravioli* might descend from the same source.
8. Günay Kut, "On the Additions By Shirwani (15th Century?) To His Translation of a Cookery-Book (13th Century)", in Feyzi Halici, ed., *Second International Food Congress, 1988* (Konya: Konya Kültür ve Turizm Vakfi, 1989), vol. I.
9. Ibid.
10. Nevin Halici, "Turkish Folk Cuisine", in Feyzi Halici, ed., *Second International Food Congress, 1988* (Konya: Konya Kültür ve Turizm Vakfi, 1989), vol. I.

1989 U.S.-SOVIET EXPEDITION

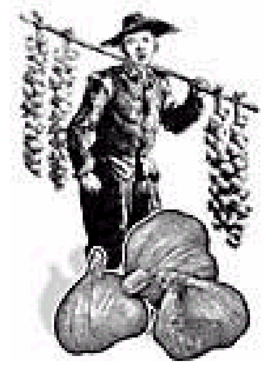
STALKING ALLIUMS ALONG THE SILK ROAD

by John Swenson

John F. Swenson, 75, of Glenview, IL (a suburb of Chicago), is a retired corporate attorney, a Great Lakes historian, and one of the world's leading collectors and authorities on heirloom varieties of garlic, onion, and other edible plants. He was a co-founder and -organizer of the annual "Garlic is Life" Symposium and Festival, and was a major contributor to The Wild Onion Cookbook *(Northern Illinois Unit of the Herb Society of America, 1997). John has served as a volunteer in the Plant Information Office of the Chicago Botanic Garden, and as a member of Seed Savers Exchange and its Advisory Council.*

The Silk Road runs through the native homeland of many important food plants. Cereal grains, fruits, vegetables and herbs of many kinds had their origin here, and the commerce of the Silk Road spread them far and wide. This trade is thousands of years old, and the extensive dispersion of growing things is a living trace of the travels of thousands of unknown merchants who were driven by taste and profit to journey through exotic lands.

Certainly this is true for the dispersion of culinary Alliums from their center of dispersion in Central Asia. This area, stretching roughly from the Tien Shan range of western China and the Himalayas to the eastern limits of the Fertile Crescent, is home to the ancestors and descendants of garlic and onions. The forebear of our cultivated onion is *Allium vavilovii*, native of the Kopet Dagh mountains, which form the border between northeastern Iran and Turkmenistan. The wild plant, named for the great Russian botanist and plant historian Nikolai Vavilov, has been virtually extirpated from its places of origin by millennia of over-collecting. It is a very pungent vegetable which borders on the inedible, but for centuries was eaten by the local population and gradually improved into its contemporary form by many generations of observant growers. If you grow it, and I have, you are struck by the thought that a lot of people put a lot of effort over thousands of years to produce the wide variety of onions, shallots and related vegetables. For most of history and, indeed, prehistory, the improvement of this unimpressive wildling was done by selection of natural variations in the plants. Then along came plant



breeders and geneticists who have coaxed natural forms into man-sponsored domesticates. But there ought to be a lot of genetic diversity in the original plant population, if it could be found. And find it indeed did Vavilov and his colleagues from Leningrad.

Garlic, long known as *Allium sativum*, is also a native of Central Asia. Over a vast span of years, the original plant has assumed many forms, all of which share the pungent taste that people have come to love or dislike. There are hundreds of named varieties of garlic, some of them with the flower stalks of the most primitive types, and the soft-necked plants which usually don't develop stalks, or *scapes* in technical terms. The fact that cultivated garlic almost never produces viable seed, and then only on the hard-necked scape-bearing types, suggests that somewhere on the planet is the seed-producing progenitor. The usual candidate for this honor is *Allium longicuspis* of Central Asia. In the wild, this unpromising plant grows in inhospitable places, such as rocky seasonal streambeds on mountainsides. This apparent isolation has encouraged the majority view that the scattered populations of this plant represent the ancestral species. Cultivation over time has produced some 25 or 30 distinct genotypes, identified by their DNA patterns. Genetic studies up to about 1985 suggested that the ancestral species had yet to be found, but only a field investigation could answer the question of garlic's origins. Only in the past few years has the putative ancestor of garlic been found, a virtually extinct plant in southeastern Turkey. It will be many years before this living relic makes it into cultivation and into our kitchens.

Much of the genetic study of these two major Alliums had been carried on in the laboratory of Dr. Philipp Simon, Professor of Horticulture at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. In my personal research into these plants that I had been growing for many years, it was almost inevitable that I would meet Phil Simon, and in 1984 I did. Phone calls and letters were followed by personal visits to Madison, and Phil must have been impressed by my enthusiasm, which led to exchanges of Allium planting material from the USDA, in which he is an important member of the

Agricultural Research Service. Because of my involvement in collecting heirloom Alliums as a member of Seed Savers Exchange, I was able to pass along eventually hundreds of accessions to the USDA's collections.

So it was not entirely a surprise that in 1986 Phil called me to ask whether I would be interested in joining a U.S.-Soviet expedition to collect Alliums in Central Asia. "When do we leave?" was my immediate response. Well, three years of planning preceded our departure for the Soviet Union in July, 1989. Because of its proximity to Afghanistan, just to the south of Soviet territory, the crisis of invasion and war made planning for such an excursion difficult. Travel anywhere in the Soviet Union by foreigners was hard to arrange in any event, and Central Asia was experiencing a lot of unrest and ethnic strife. So it was understandable that it took three years to put this plan together and arrange for travel by U.S. citizens of any stripe in an extensive area ranging between Iran and China.

The Expedition Gets Underway

The U.S. Department of Agriculture made all the international arrangements, and our host institution, the N. I. Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry, arranged the necessary permits for the actual plant collecting. Intourist, the official travel agent, made travel arrangements, including plane tickets and hotel accommodations. Visas were arranged by, among other things, near-miracles, including the fact that we did not get ours until just before departure from O'Hare Airport in Chicago in early July.

After some very interesting travels to and visits in Moscow and Leningrad, we were finally ready to collect plants. But for me as an amateur botanist and student of the origins and diversity of food plants, the high point of our preliminary visits was certainly being escorted into the restored office of Vavilov himself. This courageous scientist, one of the world's greatest plant experts, had been persecuted and then jailed by the Soviet authorities because his science was politically incorrect in the context of the Lamarckian frauds perpetrated by Lysenko, Stalin's favorite botanist. Vavilov died in prison. His scientific colleagues starved to death in the siege of Leningrad rather than eat the precious seeds that had been collected and stored in their institute. With this background, one can understand that I was overwhelmed by the privilege of sitting in Vavilov's own chair at his own desk, and being asked to write in the register of guests. My tribute to this courageous scientist was on the same page with messages in Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and some other languages I couldn't identify.

Finally we got to Central Asia, on a night flight from Moscow to Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan. The Kopet Dagh ("venerable mountain") range lies just to the west of this interesting city. We stayed in a hotel across the street from a huge but inactive construction site. The food in the hotel's restaurant was pretty good, featuring a lot of lamb, vegetables, and wines from Bulgaria and Georgia (Gruzia in Russian). But our job was to be involved with the plant scientists, so we visited the Turkmen Botanic Institute and the Botanic Garden. Hospitality was generous, with tables piled with fruits, cookies, and green tea.

We collected in two areas. Up high in the Kopet Dagh, within view of the Iranian border, we found our first Alliums. Not *vavilovii*, however. Dr. Durdiev of the Botanic Garden, who was flattered that I had a copy of his monograph on the plant in my briefcase, explained that the wild population had been virtually destroyed by centuries of over-collection. We did find some nice *A. christophii* in a grove of deciduous trees along the only stream in this arid, mountainous landscape. Other Alliums and other interesting species came back to our hotel with us, along with many photographs in my camera.

We made another collecting foray northwest to the resort village of Bakharden, but not many plants turned up, certainly no *vavilovii*. The most memorable aspect of this trip was encountering a large herd of Bactrian camels almost blocking the highway and drinking some of their fermented milk (a distant cousin of buttermilk) diluted with water of unknown origin. At the Botanic Garden we toured the extensive grounds, the most striking portion of which was devoted to North American trees and shrubs, like the ones we found lining the city streets in Ashkhabad. We exchanged seeds with the Garden's scientists. I gave a few seeds of *Allium tricoccum*, the ramp or wild garlic for which Chicago is named (from the Miami Indian word *chicagoua*). The Garden's seed storage was maintained at a steady ambient temperature at least as high as the outdoor air, which was then about 35 degrees Celsius, or 95 Fahrenheit. None of these seed samples was viable. I was especially disappointed that the seed of the very rare *A. regelii*, which I had sought for years, did not germinate when I got it home.

Then we took a night flight to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, mostly over the vast Kara Kum Desert. Our flights had to be at night, of course, because we were really working for the CIA and would certainly garner lots of dangerous data during a daytime flight.

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STALKING ALLIUMS continued from page 7

So we got to Samarkand, and were put up in what had been, in pre-Soviet days, a very nice hotel. Our first rooms were already occupied by some rather large insects, and so we were transferred to other rooms the occupants of which, other than ourselves, remained discreetly invisible. Samarkand is a beautiful city, the ancient capital of Tamerlane. We visited the bazaar, or public market, as we had in Ashkhabad, and found that in both places all manner of living and formerly living things were for sale. At both places we bought garlic to take home, and luscious melons for immediate consumption. The lamb butchers, much in evidence sitting by half-carcasses, generously did not charge for the numerous flies which attended their wares. We had a very interesting visit to the museum of the Karakul sheep industry, where we saw what your grandmother called Persian Lamb in an amazing range of colors, virtually from black to white with every kind of brown in between. We had little time to do the tourist bit, but an ancient mosque adjoined the bazaar and was topped by a stunning blue dome.

Somewhere north of Samarkand we visited the local experiment station, having passed kilometers of onion fields in bloom. Much onion breeding was carried on here, and we got a lot of seed samples. Again, the hospitality was warm and generous. We sat on a platform in the shade of an ancient tree and ate fruit and drank the ubiquitous and delicious green tea, the fruit local, the tea from India.

At our Samarkand hotel we were met by Government vehicles, a jeep-type and an old Army truck, which were to be our transportation for the next several days. We loaded our baggage into the truck and departed the city, driving down a boulevard lined with what looked a lot like American elms. The highway looked much like European and American roads, although the vehicles were mostly of a vintage one would find in a less-than-respectable used-car lot.

Wild Garlic is Found

We spent a couple of nights camping by the roadside in the Zeravshan mountains north of the town of Kitab, and it was here that we found our first “wild” garlic. It was growing in a dry, rocky mountain streambed, and the bulbs were buried so deeply that we were limited to collecting the bulbils (the small, bulb-like parts growing on the tips of the scapes). A gushing spring by the roadside provided plenty of delicious water, and the night sky was filled with stars and offered no aircraft lights. We found along the road an herb from which the locals make a tea that is said to relieve hypertension. It looks a little like oregano, but I was unable to identify it from the various floras I had with me or gathered along the way. Only years later did I learn that it is *Hyssopus seravschanicus*. The only seed source I have identified for it is the Rock Garden Society. It is definitely worthy of a place in your garden.

Then we visited the Karl Marx experiment station far back in the mountains, and camped in an orchard at a hill village called Kalta Kul, where we found some interesting Alliums, but no garlic or onions. After this rustic pleasure stop we broke for dinner at a restaurant in Shakhrisyabz, Tamerlane’s home town. Beef stroganov, not a local delicacy. For that we had to stop at a local bakery to get some of the indigenous flatbread, really quite good.

Our next long stop was in Tashkent, an ancient and modern metropolis complete with an excellent subway system. We had spent an unfortunate evening at a supposed collecting site in the desert near Leninabad, Tadjikistan, memorable for Phil Simon’s getting so sick that we had to get him to the hospital in Tashkent. He was taken there by the jeep, so the rest of us experienced the joys of a night-long journey in a Soviet Army truck, down an unlit road filled with unlit vehicles, bicycles, donkey carts and pedestrians. In Tashkent, our base of operations, we stayed in a unique triangular tower of a hotel with a splendid view of the local and ancient Muslim *madrasah*, or religious school. In the bazaar we found lots of onions and garlic, plus the peach that is shaped like a bagel. Dinner and a floor show in the hotel followed, and like any American tourist I bought a bottle of delicious Georgian brandy for the ruble equivalent of $43.00. The floor show was delightful, and expert witnesses testified that it was only a cut below those in Las Vegas.

We took a side trip to the Chatkal reserve near Parkent, where we stopped for a lunch of the first real local food we’d had— lamb *shashlik*. You don’t call it *shish kebab* in Parkent, or you will be branded a rube from out of town. Then a three-hour drive into the mountains to the reserve. This was really spectacular. Most of the party took off on horseback for two days of camping and collecting. I set up camp and botanized while they had more than their share of hair-raising adventures on horseback. They were rewarded with spectacular views of mountains, eagles and the local ibex, which had been reduced to virtual extinction by trophy hunters. Our final meal here was a lamb stew that we shared with some travelling forest rangers. As soon as lunch was over, the scouting party returned on horseback, tired and hungry, to a virtually empty table.

On our way out of the Chatkal reserve, we stopped at the village of the horsemen who had supplied transportation into the remote mountains. Our hosts offered us bowls of *kumiss*, the traditional fermented mare's milk. As the only American brave enough to sample this beverage, I can attest to its obviously equine origin. To get to this camp, we drove on a one-lane mountain road and honked our way through a massive flock of sheep which reluctantly yielded the right of way. Then on to the marvelous Pskem river gorge, home of *Allium pskemense*, a rare perennial multiplying onion that deserves domestication but probably won't achieve it. This remote gorge also was home to *A. longicuspis*, one of many garlics we brought back home. We camped in a grove of huge walnut trees (*Juglans regia*).

Our next stop was the remote Aksu-Dzabargliy Reserve. It is so isolated that foreigners never visit it. There is a nice little museum at the Reserve's headquarters in Nova Nikolaevka, where the local Kazakh children (we were now in Kazakhstan) were delighted to get my peppermint candy from Chicago. In the mountain meadows we collected Alliums, and wild carrots, another specialty of Phil Simon's. Poor Phil was not with us, however, but in the hospital in Tashkent, but our colleague, Prof. Leonard Pike of Texas A&M, a noted onion and carrot breeder, maintained the honor of American plant research. So did Dr. Teresa Kotlinska of Poland, who had joined us at the outset of our trip in Leningrad.

We returned to Tashkent, stopping along the road in its suburbs to drink some cold Pepsi-Cola. In the evening we visited Phil at the hospital. He spent several days there, not understanding a word of Russian spoken by the medical staff, which spoke no English. He said he kept his sanity by recalling the songs of the Beatles! We were able to get him out of there by some high-powered cajolery, just in time to catch a flight to Leningrad.

It was so hot in Tashkent that our flight was delayed for an hour at this major international airport because the air was not dense enough to support the flight of our giant Ilyushin jet. As it was, we cleared the perimeter fence by maybe a meter or so. Dinner on board was probably the culinary low point of the trip, featuring greasy and inferior chicken. We were really glad to get to Leningrad and, I am sorry to say, back to civilization.

We had a final meeting at the Vavilov Institute. I remember telling Dr. Sergei Alexanian, the Director of Foreign Relations and our official senior host, that I had met two notable Armenians in Leningrad. He asked who they were, and I replied they were Dr. Alexanian himself and the exquisite cognac, Ararat, from Yerevan. This legendary beverage, as good as anything from France, was Winston Churchill's favorite, and I had joined him in appreciating it.

From Leningrad we departed for Frankfurt, and then back to Chicago. Our arrival there was memorable for the only near-mishap we had experienced in travelling half way around the world and back. For although we had traveled on jet planes, trucks, buses, streetcars, horses, river excursion boats and foot, our travels to that point had been blessedly uneventful. Considering that we had driven on unpaved mountain roads through herds of sheep, around mountain curves on unfenced routes with thousand-meter drop-offs, and starlit highways full of unmarked slower traffic, it was remarkable that we had escaped without a scratch. But our luck almost ran out at O'Hare. As the bus was taking us along the taxiway from the aircraft to the terminal, a driverless train of baggage carts passed right in front of us, causing the driver to slam on his brakes, to the applause of a load of weary travelers. This unattended vehicular assemblage passed without incident under the fuselage of a taxiing jet and out of view. Quite an anticlimax to the most exciting journey of my life.

Our extensive plant collection followed us on a separate shipment from the Botanic Institute in Tashkent, where our Soviet colleagues took out their agreed share of the expedition's finds. The American share went into the USDA germ-plasm collection. The garlics I had purchased, and a part of those I had collected, went home with me and were planted in my garden. These garlics, which I named Samarkand Purple (renamed, not by me, Persian Star, although from Uzbekistan), Kitab, Chatkal and Pskem, are now found in commerce. In cultivation they produce large bulbs with few cloves and have provided a delightful culinary coda to a unique foray into the remote parts of Central Asia. ■

Watch for our Summer 2005 issue:

Silk Road Adventures, Part Two

- Glenn R. Mack contemplates "The Chicken or the Egg?: Creating a Central Asian Cuisine for Uzbekistan"
- Xenia Heinickel explores "Food from the Temples: Asian Influences on Japanese Foodways"
- Carlo Coppola reviews Najmieh Batmanglij's *Silk Road Cooking: A Vegetarian Journey*

THIS MEAL WAS A CLASSIC: FOODS OF THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN

Most of the ancient sauces have a wild and poisonous savour, including privet, rue, fenugreek, green coriander and even cumin… Who would not prefer Bologna sausages to a paste of cuttle-fish and squid, or Spanish *olla podrida* to Apicius' mince-meat? Beans and all kind of pease, the Stoics' dinner, our yeoman would put in the cattle-trough.

—*Collected Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, 1835

Can modern cooks hope to reproduce flavors from 2,000 years ago— and if so, would they even find the results edible? These were among the questions hanging in the balance when the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor convened on December 12 for a dinner with a classical theme.

This was no silly toga party! The participants, nearly 50 strong, had each been sent an invitation and bibliography that began: "We challenge you to take a giant step back in time to re-create dishes served in ancient Rome, ancient Greece, and the ancient Middle East." The result of their study and toil was a feast held in a large basement room at the Huntington Woods Public Library. For hosting this event we extend laurels to library director Shelly Droz and her husband Alan, who were both on hand.

Let the Feasting Begin

The four staples of the ancient Mediterranean were grains, pulses, olives, and grapes, and they were all well-represented at our meal.

Our dining tables had been set with cruets of olive oil and with fresh wheaten flatbreads, provided by Pat Cornett and Mel Annis. Before baking the palm-sized breads, Pat had brushed them with additional oil and some of the *za'tar* herbs still popular today in the Eastern Mediterranean: dried thyme, sesame seeds, and *sumac*, the mouth-puckering powder of a dried red berry. In ancient times, bread— specifically, its need to be dipped in something— was what gave real value to olive oil, or "liquid gold" as Homer called it in the *Odyssey*. To make breads, cakes, gruels, and porridges, not only wheat but other cereals like spelt, barley, and oats were used (see Alison Cooper, "Feasting and Fasting in Classical Greece", *Repast* Spring 2004; and Randy Schwartz, "Roman Food Production in North Africa", *Repast* Fall 2004).

Especially in the centuries before the lemon was introduced in the Mediterranean region, *sumac* or vinegar, the latter easily made from wine, was used to give a sour flavor to certain dishes and to help preserve certain foods. Joann and Ned Chalat brought us two salads dressed with vinegar and olive oil, using recipes from Eileen Gaden's *Biblical Garden Cookery*. The first was made with lentils, black olives, and finely chopped shallots. The second salad, associated with the Assyrian capital Calah (later called Nimrud), was made with sliced cucumber and mint.

In Rome, the basic yeasted flatbread was a disk-shaped loaf heavily scored with four crisscross lines before baking, hence the name *panis quadratus* [provided by Phil and Barbara Zaret]. The recipe Phil found, from Jon and Julia Solomon's *Ancient Roman Feasts and Recipes*, calls for a good amount of salty fish-sauce, the most common seasoning in the ancient Mediterranean (see Phil's article "*Liquamen* and Other Fish Sauces", *Repast* Fall 2004). *Liquamen*, like oil and wine, was shipped all over the region in clay *amphorae*.

As a table wine we sipped Salice Salentino [Dan and Jan Longone], a "black" wine from Apulia. Wine and must, the just-fermenting juice of grapes, were also used in the ancient world to flavor various dishes and to provide the yeasting action needed to raise breads. In his *De Agricultura*, the Roman farmer-statesmen Cato the Elder advised how to bake *mustacei* [Richard McDonald and Linda Doros], which are cakes or buns made from wheat flour moistened with must and shortened with lard. Sheep's-milk cheese and anise and cumin seeds are also added to the dough before baking. Not being a vintner like Cato the Elder, Richard the Resourceful approximated the must by using commercial yeast and some Nouveau Beaujolais!

Artichoke and asparagus, probably the two most popular vegetables in ancient Rome, were prepared for our meal in a venerable way: boiled or steamed, then cooled and dressed. We enjoyed globe artichokes [John and Carroll Thomson] dressed with olive oil, oregano, salt, and pepper, but this domesticated type of artichoke seems to have come later. The one known in ancient times was the cardoon, prized as much for its tasty stalks as for its modest-sized flower heads. Our asparagus tips [Mary Lou Unterburger] were dressed with chopped walnuts, vinaigrette, and soy sauce, the latter not a bad substitute for *liquamen*. Roman emperor Augustus Cæsar once uttered the phrase "quicker than it takes to cook asparagus", reflecting the light touch given to this vegetable. It was gathered wild along seacoasts and riverbanks, and also purchased at markets in its cultivated form.

Apicius Can Be Delicious

Eight of our dishes were based on *De Re Coquinaria*, the only cookery book surviving from the classical period. It's attributed to Apicius and dates from late antiquity, perhaps c. 400 AD. Since many of the ingredients are difficult or impossible to find today, we relied on helpful adaptations in sources like Ilaria Gozzini Giacosa's *A Taste of Ancient Rome*, and Francine Segan's recent *The Philosopher's Kitchen: Recipes from Ancient Greece and Rome for the Modern Cook.*

This wasn't simple fare. Even the humble lentil bean received a lavish treatment from Apicius. His 500 or so recipes seem to have been aids in preparing meals for wealthy Romans. For centuries, the plebeians of Rome had survived on *pulmentarium*, a simple porridge of lentils or fava beans. But we tried two lentil dishes from Apicius that were something else entirely. His *lenticulam de castaneis* (lentils with chestnuts) [Marjorie Cripps] includes not only simmered lentils and chestnuts, olive oil, vinegar, honey, and *liquamen*, but also a cascade of herbs and spices such as mint, coriander, rue, flea-bane, black pepper, cumin, and laser root. *Aliter lenticulam* (literally "another lentil dish") [Joanne and Art Cole] starts with lentils and leeks, and continues in a similar vein as with the first recipe.

Why so many ingredients? In a way, it was doctors' orders! Physicians believed that to maintain equilibrium among the bodily humors, the diet needed to balance "hot, cold, wet, and dry" qualities, which were to be found in varying degrees (1 through 4) in each food substance (see Charles Feldman, "Blended Cuisine in Ancient Rome", *Repast* Fall 2004). In the lentil dishes mentioned above, spices like pepper and cumin (considered hot and dry) served to balance out the lentils (considered cold) and the broth (wet). Mint was also considered dry, whether used in fresh or dried form. To counteract the hot spices, coriander (the only cold spice) and vinegar (cold and dry) were added. A good hedge against this added cold was to finish the dish with honey (hot) and fermented fish sauce (hot and dry). In this way, legions of ingredients were dispatched against each other to create an intricate balance. No wonder physicians, charts, and recipes were needed to figure it all out!

Of course, pleasure and ostentation were also goals of the Apician recipes. To make the lentil dishes, pepper had to be fetched all the way from southern India, and cumin from the coast of Libya. Not to mention "laser root", whose pungent, gummy sap was extolled by doctors. This had formerly meant silphium root, but silphium, a relative of fennel, grew only in Libya, and Roman greed soon drove it to extinction. By Apicius's day, "laser root" meant another root resin, asafoetida, which had to be imported all the way from Persia. The Coles substituted garlic for this in making the lentils.

She Made the Right Caul

Making stuffed kidneys from Apicius [Julie and Bob Lewis] also presents a number of challenges for the urban American cook. At least some instructions in English are available in *The Classical Cookbook* by Andrew Dalby and Sally Grainger, who give the following translation of the original recipe alongside their own redaction:

> Grilled kidneys are made as follows: They are cut down the middle to spread them out, and seasoned with ground pepper, pine kernels and very finely chopped coriander and ground fennel seed. Then the kidneys are closed up, sewn together, wrapped in caul, parboiled in oil and fish sauce, and then baked in a crock or on a grill.

Julie was able to get Italian-imported fish sauce from Zingerman's Deli, and fresh lamb's kidneys from Sparrow Meat Market. Ingredients like pinenuts and olive oil presented little problem, but it was harder to locate pig's caul. Roman cooks often wrapped meats in this fatty membrane because it helps retain shape and impart flavor during cooking. As a substitute, Julie procured some thin slices of pork fat. She recounted: "I rendered some of the pieces of pork fat and then drizzled a little of the melted fat over the kidneys before I put them in the oven to bake. That way I thought the flavor would be present; instead of sewing each kidney (which would have been very tedious) I secured each one with two toothpicks and cut them in half when they came out of the oven."

Roast duck with hazelnuts [Judy Goldwasser] is another Apician recipe reconstructed in *The Classical Cookbook*. The bird roasts in a thick, elegant coating of red wine, vinegar, honey, crushed toasted nuts (almonds in the original), and mint and other herbs and seasonings. This baste was also recommended for roasting partridges, woodcocks, doves, ostriches, and other types of fowl.

One of the biggest hits at our meal was the hearty winter dish *minutal matianum* (pork stew with apples) [Bill and Yvonne Lockwood], found in *A Taste of Ancient Rome*, where it's suggested it might be an ancestor of German recipes for pork with apples. *Minutal*, often translated as "fricassee", meant a stew of small or "minute" pieces, in this case dices of pork shoulder, leeks, and apples; when the stew begins to boil, it is thickened with *tracta*, believed to be either pasta noodles or crumbled bits of pastry. Both the dish and the Matian apple, which Apicius calls for in his recipe, were named for Gaius Matius, a friend of Julius Cæsar. Matius reportedly wrote three now-lost books of recipes that he'd diligently collected for use in public dinners and banquets.

The ancients made no sharp distinction between savory and sweet dishes, as seen above with the honey and fruits used in stews and sauces. Another example from our meal was Apicius's leg of pork roasted with dried figs and honey, which we had in Segan's adapted form of roast pork shoulder with brandied fig sauce [Sonia Manchek]. The Apician *patina de piris* (pear soufflé) [Jan Arps and Octavian Prundeanu] calls for sweet ingredients like pears, honey, and raisin wine, but also pepper, cumin, and fish sauce. These *patinae* formed a broad category of dishes generally set with eggs, thus somewhat like our quiches, custards, and soufflés. *Patina* is named for the shallow dish or plate in which these were served; a variant, a small bronze saucepan, was called *patella*, source of the words *paella* (Spanish) and *poêle* (French).

Dulcia domestica (housemade sweet) [Bob and Midge Lusardi] was delicious, made with dates (either fresh or, as in our case, dried), which are pitted and stuffed with pinenuts, then stewed in honey. As in most of his nine recipes labeled Sweets, Apicius suggests that pepper could be used in this confection! We also had two modernized, sugary desserts: walnut cake layered with fig jam [Rita Goss], adapted from an ancient Greek tradition, and sesame honey cheesecake tart [Pat Cornett and Mel Annis], adapted from the Greek writer Athenæus (c. 200 AD).

Finding the Ancient in the Modern

In establishing the modern European dessert tradition, much of the credit or blame goes to *hippocras* [Howard and Mamie Paige], a medieval hot cordial with ancient roots. In medieval recipes for this, red wine was simmered with sugar and such spices as cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, and Guinea pepper ("grains of Paradise"). The spices were strained out using a conical cloth filter devised by Greek physicians, the "bag of Hippocrates", whence the name. In the Middle Ages, the ancient humoral theories still reigned supreme: the spices in *hippocras* were intended as laxatives

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C.H.-CHICAGO CELEBRATES *OXFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA*

by CHAA member Eleanor Hoag

To celebrate the recent publication of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, our sister organization, the Culinary Historians of Chicago, sponsored an all-day symposium "Munching Your Way through the Midwest: Celebrating the History of America's Food and Drink", on Saturday, October 23. Scholars of foodways and food history who had worked on the encyclopedia presented papers. I attended as a guest, as did some members of the Culinary Historians of Ontario. Altogether, about 100 people participated— scholars, K-12 educators, museum curators, journalists, food writers, and other food enthusiasts— mostly from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

The event was held at the new downtown Chicago location of Kendall College, a professional school for training in the culinary arts and the hospitality industry, formerly located in Evanston, Illinois. A century ago, this six-story, Goose Island building served as a tannery. In more recent years, it had been used as a Sara Lee Corp. factory. Now completely renovated, it is a state-of-the-art building that officially opened in January 2005 with 600 students, 14 teaching kitchens, 100 ranges, and a 200-seat auditorium complete with an on-stage demonstration kitchen. CHC raises money each year for student scholarships to Kendall through the sale of cookbooks and the fees for special lectures, seminars, and culinary events.

In his introductory talk, the General Editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia*, Andrew Smith, pointed out that an academic project such as this investigation into American foodways was not possible until very recently. Culinary history has made rapid strides in the last decade, successfully pulling together people from many different fields in the attempt to gain intellectual insight into American food and drink. Amazingly, the two-volume project took only two years, not the 10 years that many anticipated. He believes that the 770 entries, selected for inclusion out of a possible 3,000, only scratch the surface. The important criterion for each entry was, "Does it say something new and different?" With a second printing already completed, sales of about 10,000 copies are expected. Some criticism has been levied that the book, despite "America" appearing in the title, does not cover the contributions and history of those other Americas, Canada and Latin America.

Andrew Smith, a model historian and researcher at the New School University in Manhattan, pointed out in his keynote address that it was essentially the English who established American foodways and that these survived almost 300 years, with some exceptions. Native American foodways, for example, had no real effect on colonial food patterns. In fact, the turkey, a truly American bird, which the colonists hunted and ate, was never used for food by the Eastern Indians, nor were its feathers used for decoration. Not only was the turkey regarded as a cowardly creature because it would run away, but it was despised because as an omnivore, it ate insects, "no-no's" to the Indians. The Civil War did have a notable effect on our national foodways, as did new transportation such as the Erie Canal. Subsequent migration within the country, as well as the increasing foreign immigration after the 1880's, brought many changes. The movement of freed slaves and their descendants to the North, where they frequently found work as cooks or in other occupations, opened up our national cuisine to southern and Afro-American influences.

"Milk in America" was the subject of Daniel Block's encyclopedia entry and his early research. Block, a geographer at Chicago State University, was originally interested in milk-price differences between California and the Midwest, but he also explored the influence of German settlements in Wisconsin on the growth of the dairy industry, as well as how milk was affected by the development of American cities. The universal availability of fresh milk is really an urban phenomenon that developed after the mid-19th Century. Formerly, milk had usually been changed into products such as cheese and butter. But with refrigeration, wealthy city mothers who did not wish to nurse, for example, could get cow's milk from urban distilleries. Investigations into the adulteration and contamination of milk did lead to shocking revelations. These encouraged the idea that a city is no place for milk, that milk should be produced in "grass regions" only. Block summarized the long history involving public health questions, the setting of strict standards for large-scale milk production and the testing of cows. The gradual regulation of the dairy industry, and the influx of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, where fresh milk had enjoyed wider traditional acceptance than in England, encouraged health authorities to proclaim milk as the magic food for children. Milk had such a variety of nutrients at such a relatively cheap price. Block admitted that milk is being over-promoted and over-industrialized today. As a reaction to concerns surrounding our mass-production industrial dairy system, including its increasing use of bovine growth hormones, a smaller-scale organic dairy system has risen to compete with it. Although Block believes organic milk is not that different from conventional milk, he expects that there will continue to be a demand for the former by those who can afford it.

A change of pace came with CHC member Catherine Lambrecht's presentation on "Pies", which featured colorful PowerPoint illustrations. A blue-ribbon winner in pies at the Illinois State Fair, Lambrecht believes that pies have been one of only two distinctively American foods (the other being sandwiches). Although pies have appeared in some form in other countries, it was Americans who took this great idea and improved it— we adapted pies to our lives and to our foodstuffs. We had the flour, the fruit and the lard. Even on their trek westward, pioneer women baked pies in their Dutch ovens. Expecting a scarcity of food, they carried dried apples with them: after all, to conserve space, 20 bushels of apples could be dried and reduced to only 3. They were not, of course, baking our modern apple pies; for one thing, they had no sugar or cinnamon. Often, women far from stores and farm larders had to make a type of pie using crackers for filling, instead of apples. (Remember the Ritz cracker pie craze not so many years ago?) Lambrecht reviewed what she sees as the quintessential American pies, including pumpkin or squash pie, molasses pie, pecan pie, and Key Lime pie with its graham cracker crust. The history of the pecan pie is especially interesting. After the Civil War, the South needed cash crops that used less labor than cotton. Georgia turned to pecan trees, which were native only to southern Illinois and Iowa. Over a period of 20-25 years, the trees were studied in Georgia, selectively bred and/or root-grafted so that the nuts were larger, meatier, more disease-resistant, and more consistent in ripening time. The introduction of Karo corn syrup in 1902 further spurred the popularity of pecan pies, noted for their rich taste and crunchy texture. As a bonus, Lambrecht detailed, with pictures, the steps needed to prepare grapes for the little-known Concord grape pie, and the steps needed to make a good pie crust.

CHAA members Yvonne and Bill Lockwood were featured presenters regarding their encyclopedia essay on "Midwestern Regional Cooking". Yvonne, a folklorist at Michigan State University, gave an overview of Midwestern food and foodways. The Midwest is known as a home of good, hearty, plain eating— pies, homemade bread, and Jello salads. Fresh ingredients are important, meat is a staple, and milk and milk products are used more here than elsewhere, she said. Early migration from New York and New Jersey transplanted some Eastern seaboard traditions here, but those foodways were soon modified by immigrants from northern Europe, such as Germans with their emphasis on pork and dairy products. The Midwest is a complex region that reflects not only diverse ethnic backgrounds but also the many distinctive foodstuffs available, such as wild persimmons, thimbleberries, pawpaws, hickory nuts, cranberries, blueberries, wild rice, maple syrup, mushrooms, sour cherries, apple cider, and apple butter. Bill, an anthropologist from the University of Michigan, focused on our Detroit area's unique contribution to American fast food: the Coney! (I must confess, up to now I had never considered trying this local culinary treat.) The Coney Island hot dog, known simply as a "Coney", is a boiled hot dog (either Lafayette or National), placed on a bun and covered with a ground-beef chili sauce flavored with some 20-30 spices. Interestingly, Bill said, most Coney Island restaurants are owned by Macedonians, the same group who own most of the bakeries in Detroit, whether they are thought to be Polish or German. Not Detroit, however, but Flint, MI was recommended as the best destination for a great Coney!

Russell Zanca, an anthropologist at Northern Illinois University, spoke on "Ethnic Foods". He pointed out that TV ads, the special-food aisles in supermarkets, and the ever-expanding ethnic restaurant choices, are evidence of a transnationalism that has attracted urban upper- and middle-class Americans. These changes in food patterns result from such factors as the dominance of capitalism, the year-round availability of new foods, and the changing nature of immigration. The most popular and most accessible ethnic foods in the Chicago area are Mexican, Chinese and Middle Eastern. All these have been successfully tailored to American tastes. In contrast, the foods of South and Southeast Asia (Indian, Pakistani, Thai, etc.) have not been noticeably tailored. Restaurants offering those foods, such as *nan* and *samosas*, appeal to a more upscale, sophisticated clientele. Yogurt and yogurt-based products are increasingly popular, as are Iranian, Afghan, and Uzbek fare.

Kantha Shelke encouraged us to look at the foods of the future. She is a food scientist at the Chicago-based firm Corvus Blue LLC, and also editor of the *CHC Newsletter*. Dr. Shelke brought us up to date on genetically engineered foods and other new technologies. Researchers are working, for example, to develop foods with medicinal qualities. But if healthy new foods are to be successful, they must still taste great. One new product just being marketed is Enova**,** a blend of canola and soybean oil that helps reduce fat and triglycerides. Food scientists are working to design products for a low-carb lifestyle, which Shelke believes will be increasingly accepted as the best route to health. Already, a flaxseed pasta has been created that looks and tastes good and is low-carb, calcium-rich, fiber-rich, and cholesterol-lowering. Another new pasta product, developed by Dreamfields, is made from quality durum wheat semolina, but the semolina particles are coated with peptin. It has all the taste and texture of a traditional pasta, but fewer carbohydrates are absorbed in the body. Sample boxes were given out to the audience.

In a panel discussion, several other encyclopedia contributors briefly summarized their articles. Scott Warner, for example, a freelance food writer and CHC member who wrote about chefs and their place in culinary history, limited his oral presentation to Louis Szathmary, the famous Hungarian chef-owner of the Bakery Restaurant in Chicago until his death in 1996. Szathmary opened the acclaimed restaurant in 1963 in an old building on the near North side. Seating only 117 guests, the Bakery was very simply furnished with second-hand furniture and silver in what could be described as Late Salvation Army décor. Charlie Trotter, well-known today in Chicago's restaurant scene, demonstrated early his interest in food by taking his high-

continued on next page

Encyclopedia Launchings

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America is a two-volume work billed as "the first major authoritative reference work on America's food history and foodways." The premier launching of the encyclopedia took place in September 2004 at the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery in England. Additional encyclopedia launchings have been hosted by the culinary history groups in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., New York City, Boston, and other cities. These one-day meetings, usually supported in part by various components of the local food industry, have been very successful in bringing attention not only to the encyclopedia, which sells very well at a special price during the events, but also to the local culinary historians and their activities. The Chicago Culinary Historians are to be commended for a well-conceived, interesting, and problem-free meeting. Similar launchings can still be scheduled by contacting Andrew Smith (Asmith1946@aol.com).

— Yvonne and Bill Lockwood

THIS MEAL WAS A CLASSIC *continued from page 11*

to control bilious humors after a rich banquet. The real effect, though, was to create a taste craving for spices and for that other product of medieval Arab trade, sugar. Indeed, we found this *hippocras*, served cool, incredibly refreshing. Howard substituted grape juice for red wine, but otherwise tried to stick to a recipe from *The Forme of Cury* (London, 14th Century), even finding Guinea pepper at Detroit's Eastern Market. (For more about Guinea pepper, see *Repast* Summer 2000, p. 10; on *hippocras*, see *Repast* Winter 1999, pp. 2-5.)

Hippocras was just one of several medieval items making appearances at our meal. These were important, because they showed how the modern Mediterranean diet was formed when Christian, Jewish, Arab, Berber, and Turkish people reshaped ancient ways of eating. *Mayeritsa* [Alison Cooper], a Greek soup of lamb's offal with herbs (Alison used liver, onion, dill, romaine lettuce, and asafoetida, among other ingredients), is a Christian custom associated with the midnight Easter festivities, but it preserves the ancient practice of using herbs to make offal more tasty. Another example is Moroccan carrot salad [Rich Kato], which incorporates the cane sugar and citrus fruits that Arabs introduced to the Mediterranean from Asia during the Middle Ages. Lentils and butternut squash [Marion and Nick Holt], from Daniel Cutler's *The Bible Cookbook*, teams up a New World squash with a legume that was central in the ancient Hebrew diet. Indeed, Jews throughout the Mediterranean often led the way in adopting squashes, beans and other foods from the Western Hemisphere.

Arabs borrowed from earlier Greco-Roman culture the theory of humoral balance as well as the fondness for combining sweet and savory foods. This, along with the global reach of Islam, helps explain the practice of combining many fruits, vegetables, and spices in a single dish, exemplified by the North African *tagine*. The *teganon*, a Greek frying pan, was adopted by Arabs and renamed *tajin*, but in North Africa this word was instead applied to a shallow earthenware pot traditional among Berbers. A conical lid was developed to retain steam for a kind of baked stew, also called *tajin*, or *tagine* in French. Our *tagines* of chicken with prunes [Jane and Herb Kaufer] and lamb with apricots [Doris Miller and Sandy Berger], both from Claudia Roden recipes, included characteristic Arab spices like ginger and saffron. The first was served with whole-wheat couscous, an ancient Berber product that had been made from other grains before the Arabs brought durum wheat to the region. *Sfogi in saòr* [Margot Michael], a still-popular 14th-Century Venetian dish of sole marinated in sweet-sour sauce, came from Clifford Wright's *A Mediterranean Feast*, where it's traced to fish-marinating traditions of the Sicilian Arabs.

Spinach salad [Joann and Ned Chalat] and baked eggplant slices [Barbara DeWolfe] are so popular today in Greece and nearby countries that they seem ageless in this region. Yet spinach and eggplant were both unknown in the ancient Mediterranean. Native to Persia and India, respectively, they were introduced to Moorish Spain in the Middle Ages, and spread from there through Europe.

Yogurt, burghul, and *yufka* (phyllo dough), three ancient foods of Central Asia, were brought westward by nomadic Turks and then spread during Ottoman times. Resulting medieval dishes include Turkish *yogurtlu salgam* (fried turnips with yogurt) [Nancy Sannar], Arab *mujaddara* (lentil-burghul pottage) [Randy Schwartz], and Greek *spanakopitta* (spinach-phyllo pastry) [Gwen and John Nystuen] and *tzarouhopitta* (cabbage-phyllo pastry) [Boris Silberberg and Frances Williams]. See Bruce Kraig's article in this issue for the story of *yufka*, the Turkish ancestor of phyllo.

This was a meal both satisfying and thought-provoking. Despite some trepidation about the challenge of ancient ingredients and cooking methods, and the flavors that might result, we were pleasantly surprised by our experiment. A number of these dishes ranked very high on both the credible and edible scales, i.e., they were relatively authentic with respect to ancient history but they also pleased our modern palates. It is educational to isolate customs of ancient times that in some cases are remote and forgotten, in other cases still right under our noses. ■

CHICAGO MEETING *continued from previous page*

school prom date to the Bakery for dinner. Szathmary became a celebrity figure who not only helped raise the professional status of chefs but also helped advance the food industry (for example, he created Stouffer's frozen spinach soufflé). His newsworthy catering for celebrities such as Margaret Truman, his early TV cooking demonstrations, and his seven books on various facets of culinary art and history earned him fame and respect far beyond Chicago.

Chicago's own contribution to the fast-food industry had been recognized at the noon lunch break. Conference participants were served plates featuring both a Chicago Red Hot, the famous decorated hot dog on a bun, and a larger bun filled with spicy Italian beef. This latter is also considered a Chicago specialty. [Editor's note: CHC President Bruce Kraig is a leading expert on the history and social meaning of the hot dog in America.] A buffet supper was prepared and served by students at Kendall College. A raffle, with funds going to the CHC Scholarship Fund, and a book-signing party over wine and *hors d'oeuvres* further enlivened the day.

This all-day symposium proved to be not only interesting and informative but delightful. I learned a lot, met interesting people with similar interests, and enjoyed the unique setting. In what was always a very grimy, industrial section of my birth city of Chicago, it was good to see an old building being so successfully brought back to life. I look forward to returning to Kendall and Chicago to enjoy a student-prepared gourmet meal, to go to one of their demonstration classes, or to attend another CHC seminar. Care to join me?

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Preparations and publicity have gone well for the First Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History. Many prominent speakers and other participants have been lined up for the conference, to be held May 13-15, 2005 at the University of Michigan's William L. Clements Library. The symposium, and a related exhibition (May 16-Sept. 20), will introduce the public to the **Janice Bluestein Longone** Center for American Culinary Research. Complete information and registration forms available at http://www.clements.umich.edu/culinary/symposium.html.

CHAA members **Bill and Yvonne Lockwood** attended the 15th International Ethnological Food Research Conference, held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, Sept. 27 – Oct. 3, 2004. The theme of the conference this year was "Mediterranean Food and Its Influences Abroad". The Lockwoods presented a paper "Creating an Ethnic Food Culture: The Example of Arab Foodways in America" based on their fieldwork in the metropolitan Detroit area. In addition to the 30 or so scholarly presentations, there were also numerous group excursions to the surrounding region and dinners of local specialties. Conference proceedings will be available in 2006. The next IEFRC will be held September 2006 in Innsbruck, Austria and Meran, Italy; the theme is "Foodways and Lifestyles in the Search for Health and Beauty". Acknowledging food as one of the important determinants in the maintenance of health and beauty, the conference will focus on the interrelationship between health and nutrition from the point of view of curing or bodily maintenance. Further information can be obtained from Oliver M. Haid, Institute for European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck, Austria or Paul Rösch, Touriseum, South Tyrolean Museum for Tourism, Meran, Italy.

In conjunction with its annual conference in Dallas, the **International Association of Culinary Professionals** (IACP) has scheduled a public session on April 15, 2005. "Endangered Treasures: A Celebration of Cookbook Preservation" will celebrate the re-publication by Applewood Books of four historic cookbooks: *The National Cookery Book* (Philadelphia, 1876), *The El Paso Cook Book* (Ladies' Auxiliary of the YMCA, 1898), *The Lone Star Cook Book* (Ladies of the Dallas Free Kindergarten and Training School, 1901), and the pamphlet "Gephardt's Mexican Cooking: The Flavor of the 20th Century—That Real Mexican Tang" (c. 1908). Chefs Jacques Pépin and Martin Yan will prepare a game menu inspired by the early Texas cookbooks. The seated dinner will also include commentary from culinary historians Andrew Smith, Alice Arndt, and Robb Walsh. Proceeds support The Culinary Trust, the educational and charitable outreach partner of the IACP.

The exhibit "Have You Eaten Yet?: The Chinese Restaurant in America", curated by **Cynthia Lee** and **Yong Chen,** continues through June 30, 2005 at the Museum of Chinese in the Americas, in New York City's Chinatown. Through historical menu collections, travel diary entries, and examples of Chinese food myths, the exhibit traces the evolution of the Chinese eatery in America (and corresponding Chinese and American perceptions), from the earliest "chow chow" restaurants of the West in the mid-1800's to the nightclub dinner shows of the 1940's and the take-out culture of today. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a sampling from **Harley Spiller**'s collection of nearly 10,000 restaurant menus dating back to the late 1800's. The Museum is also holding screenings of "Chinese Restaurants", a 13-part documentary series by Canadian filmmaker **Cheuk Kwan**.

Food Culture in China (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2004; 256 pp., $49.95 cloth) is the latest release in the series Food Culture Around the World. The author is **Jacqueline M. Newman**, founder and editor of the Chinese food magazine *Flavor and Fortune*, whose article "Snack on the History of Chinese Snacks" appeared in *Repast* (Spring 2002). She begins her book with an historical overview, then covers major foods and ingredients, cooking implements and techniques, regional differences, meals eaten inside and outside the home, specialty dishes for celebrations, and the role of diet and traditional Chinese medicine. A number of recipes are included in each chapter.

Laura Shapiro, of the Culinary Historians of New York, has written *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950's America* (NY: Viking, 2004; 306 pp., $24.95 cloth; March 2005 Penguin paperback, $15). Her book dissects the largely successful campaign of firms like Pillsbury and General Mills to "sell" U.S. homemakers on the benefits of postwar food-related technology and the concept of manufactured foods. Earlier, Shapiro wrote *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (1986; reprinted 2001), a study of the movement for "scientific cookery" in late 19th-Century America.

Joan Peterson of the Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (CHEW), author/publisher of the "Eat Smart" guides to India and other countries, will lead a two-week culinary tour of northern India beginning Oct. 4 in Delhi. Information is available at http://www.ginkgopress.com.

The **Carolina Gold Rice Symposium** is scheduled for August 18-20, 2005 in Charleston, SC. The Carolina Gold Rice Foundation, organizers of the symposium, have added a Rice Bread Exposition, and they invite papers on any aspect of the history or production of rice bread. Papers presented will be considered for publication in the symposium proceedings. The deadline for proposals is April 8, 2005. To submit a proposal, please send a 250- to 300-word abstract and a short *curriculum vitae* or bio *via* e-mail to Jane Aldrich at aldrichjane@aol.com, or *via* post to: Carolina Gold Rice Foundation, 2971 Doncaster Drive, Charleston, SC 29414. For more information, visit the Foundation site: http://www.CarolinaGoldRiceFoundation.org.

Contact *Repast* editor Randy Schwartz for more information about these upcoming conferences:

Apr. 1, 2005: "Drink Up! Beverages in Early America, 1750-1850", George Mason Univ., Fairfax, VA.

Apr. 16, 2005: "Baking: From Cereal Crops to Oven-Baked Goods", 20th Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions, York, England.

Nov. 3-4, 2005: "What's for Dinner: The Daily Meal Through History". Organized jointly by McCord Museum of Canadian History and McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, Montreal, Quebec.

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, March 20, 2005
(note change in program)
"Al Dente and the American Pasta Revolution"
Monique Deschaine, founder and co-owner of
Al Dente Inc., Whitmore Lake, MI

Sunday, April 17, 2005
"'In Close Fraternal Conjunction': Canadian Cookbooks
in a North American Context"
Elizabeth Driver, President, Culinary Historians of Ontario and author of the forthcoming
Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1949 (Univ. Toronto Press)

May 13-15, 2005
First Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History
William L. Clements Library,
University of Michigan
(see page 15 for information)

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